

Message Text

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TO ALL EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

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TAGS:PFOR

SUBJECT: US POLICY TOWARD EASTERN EUROPE

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF AN ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN APRIL 2
WASHINGTON POST UNDER TITLE "THE 'SONNENFELDT DOCTRINE':
THERE IS NOT NOW AND NEVER WAS ONE" BY STEVEN ROSENFELD.

1. BEGIN TEXT: THE CREATION OF THE "SONNENFELDT DOCTRINE"
AND ITS SUBSEQUENT INCARNATION AS A DIPLOMATIC FLAP AND A
CAMPAIGN ISSUE MAKES A SOBERING CASE STUDY IN THE CHEMIS-
TRY OF JOURNALISM AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

2. IT BEGAN INNOCENTLY LAST DECEMBER IN LONDON WHEN STATE
DEPARTMENT COUNSELOR HELMUT SONNENFELDT, IN UNTAPED IN-
FORMAL REMARKS TO A MEETING OF AMERICAN AMBASSADORS,
SKETCHED AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD COMMUNIST EAST EUROPE.

3. HE OUTLINED TWO THEMES: THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF AN
"ORGANIC (MEANING NATURAL, MUTUALLY BENEFITTING, NOT
BASED ON FORCE) RELATIONSHIP" BETWEEN MOSCOW AND EAST
EUROPE, EAST-WEST WAR COULD DEVELOP OUT OF AN EAST EURO-
PEAN REVOLT; BUT THAT DESPITE THIS RISK THE UNITED STATES
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SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE IMPULSES FOR AUTONOMY IT FOUND IN

THE REGION.

4. HIS AUDIENCE DISCUSSED HIS REMARKS WITHOUT SURPRISE OR DISSENT. FOR THE TWO THEMES - APPREHENSION ABOUT WAR RESULTING FROM ANTI-SOVIET FEELING IN EAST EUROPE, AND A DESIRE TO NOURISH LOCAL NATIONALISM THERE - HAVE DEFINED THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN POLICY AT LEAST SINCE RICHARD NIXON MADE HIS OPENING TO THE SOVIET UNION. IF NOT SINCE THE POST-WAR DIVISION OF EUROPE WAS FIRMED UP AT YALTA IN 1945.

5. YOU CAN CHECK THIS, AS I DID BY REREADING THE FOUR NIXON "STATE OF THE WORLD" REPORTS, OF 1970-73, AND BY REVIEWING THE RECORD OF PRESIDENTIAL VISITS, TRADE AND CONSULAR AGREEMENTS AND THE LIKE IN THE NIXON-FORD YEARS.

6. AT LEAST TWO WASHINGTON JOURNALISTS SAVVY IN EAST-WEST AFFAIRS, HEARING OF THE LONDON BRIEFING, LOOKED INTO IT, DECIDED THAT SONNENFELDT WAS MERELY REITERATING WELL-ESTABLISHED AMERICAN POLICY, AND WROTE NOTHING.

7. COLUMNISTS ROWLAND EVANS AND ROBERT NOVAK, HOWEVER, CITING "TRANSCRIPTS," REPORTED ON THE BRIEFING ON MARCH 22, DUBBING IT "THE SONNENFELDT DOCTRINE." PARAPHRASING, THEY REPORTED THAT HE'D SAID "PERMANENT 'ORGANIC' UNION BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE IS NECESSARY TO AVOID WORLD WAR III." THEY ADDED THAT THIS "POLICY" WENT "WELL BEYOND ANY PUBLIC POSITION OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT," AND THAT "SOME OFFICIALS COMPLAINED THAT THIS AMOUNTED TO U.S. UNDERWRITING OF SOVIET DOMINION" - A COMPLAINT THEY ACCEPTED AS AN UNQUESTIONED TRUTH IN THEIR SECOND REFERENCE TO IT.

8. THE COLUMN WENT ON, ACCURATELY, TO FURNISH QUOTES BULWARKING THE SECOND ELEMENT (ENCOURAGING NATIONALISM) OF AMERICAN POLICY. BUT THE COLUMNISTS - AND MOST SUBSEQUENT COMMENTATORS - FOCUSED JUST ON THE FIRST, DESCRIBED BY THEM AS "SONNENFELDT'S CONFIRMATION OF SOVIET DOMINION."

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9. IN FACT, SONNENFELDT HAD SPOKEN OF AN "ORGANIC RELATIONSHIP" NOT AN ORGANIC UNION. EVANS AND NOVAK, WHILE USING UNION, HAD NOT PUT IT IN QUOTES, AS DID, UNFORTUNATELY, THE HEADLINE ON THEIR COLUMN IN THIS NEWSPAPER. OTHERWISE, THEIR STATEMENT OF THE "SONNENFELDT DOCTRINE" - UNION IS NECESSARY TO AVOID WORLD WAR III - WAS OVER-SIMPLIFIED AND MISLEADING.

10. FURTHER, SONNENFELDT HAD NOT GONE "BEYOND ANY (U.S.) PUBLIC POSITION" - SEE THE STATE OF THE WORLD MESSAGES. NOR, AS THE COLUMNISTS OFFERED IN THE FIRST COLUMN BUT WITHDREW IN A SECOND ON MARCH 30, HAD THE COUNSELOR OUT-UNCLASSIFIED

DISTANCED HIS CHIEF. (THAT SECOND COLUMN CITED NOT "TRANSCRIPTS" BUT A STATE "CABLE REPORTING SONNENFELDT'S BRIEFING.").

15. DID OME OFFICIALS" COMPLAIN THAT THE U.S. WAS UNDER-WRITING SOVIET DOMINION? EVANS AND NOVAK SAID SO. SO DID THE NEW YORK TIMES' C.L. SULZBERGER, WHO MEANWHILE JOINED THE ISSUE. I DON'T DOUBT IT FOR A MINUTE. FOR 30 YEARS, MANY AMERICANS HAVE CHAFED UNDER THE RESTRAINTS ON U.S. POLICY IN EAST EUROPE IMPOSED BY THE NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DOMINATING SOVIET INTEREST AND INFLUENCE IN THE REGION. MY POINT IS NOT THAT THE POLICY IS BEYOND CRITICISM BUT THAT IT'S OLD HAT.

12. HENRY KISSINGER MIGHT HAVE LIMITED THE DAMAGE BY IMMEDIATELY OFFERING A FULL PUBLIC VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL SONNENFELDT REMARKS, RATHER THAN JUST MUMBLING ABOUT GARBLED CABLES AND EXPRESSING PERSONAL PAIN. BUT, I GATHER, HE IS SO HUNG UP ON SECRETS AND LEAKS THESE DAYS THAT HE CAN'T MAKE PUBLIC AN INNOCUOUS SECRET EVEN IF IT WOULD MANIFESTLY HELP HIM.

13. SO WITHIN DAYS THE YUGOSLAVS AND ROMANIANS - WHO WITH THE POLES ARE EAST EUROPE'S CHIEF BENEFICIARIES OF THE AMERICAN POLICY OF THE CAREFULLY EXTENDED HAND - WERE REPORTED TO BE "PROFOUNDLY DISTURBED" BY THE PROSPECT OF BEING ABANDONED TO MOSCOW FOR THE SAKE OF GREAT-UNCLASSIFIED

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POWER "DETENTE."

14. IN BOTH EAST AND WEST EUROPE, SPECULATION FLOWERED THAT THE AMERICAN MOTIVE WAS TO GAIN AS QUID PRO QUO SOVIET TOLERATION OF AN AMERICAN CRACKDOWN ON COMMUNISTS IN WESTERN EUROPE. THIS REFLECTS WIDESPREAD CONTINUING POST-YALTA SUSPICION THAT THE GREAT POWERS HAVE CARVED UP THE CONTINENT INTO AIRTIGHT "SPHERES OF INFLUENCE." IN THIS INSTANCE, THE LOOK AND LOGIC OF THINGS, AS WELL AS THE WORD OF AMERICAN AND SOVIET OFFICIALS ALIKE, MILITATE AGAINST IT, I WOULD SAY.

15. MEANWHILE, SEN. HENRY JACKSON RUNNING HARD AGAINST PRESIDENT FORD ON FOREIGN POLICY, DENOUNCED THIS NEW "OUTRAGE." REP. EDWARD DERWINSKI, A VETERAN PROPONENT

OF THE "CAPTIVE NATIONS" APPROACH FAVORED BY SOME ETHNIC VOTERS, CONFIDED HIS "RISING ANGER" TO EVANS AND NOVAK. WEDNESDAY NIGHT RONALD REAGAN SCORNFULLY SUMMARIZED SONNENFELDT'S MESSAGE THIS WAY: "SLAVES SHOULD ACCEPT THEIR FATE."

16. NO DOUBT THE REPUBLIC WILL ENDURE. AMERICAN DIPLOMATS ARE PADDING AROUND TO FOREIGN CHANCERIES AND TO AROUSED LEGISLATORS AND PATIENTLY EXPLAINING THAT NO NEW POLICY WAS BEING PROPOUNDED IN LONDON. THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNERS, VORACIOUS CONSUMERS OF ISSUES, WILL FIND ANOTHER. BUT BEFORE THE EPISODE IS FORGOTTEN, LET THIS BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD: THERE WAS AND IS NO "SONNENFELDT DOCTRINE." THERE WAS SIMPLY A NEWSPAPER COLUMN ASSERTING THERE WAS ONE. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. END TEXT. KISSINGER

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